

August 18, 2009 - Feds Promise \$1.55M for Lower Ten Mile Sewers

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By Bob Niedbala, Staff writer

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JEFFERSON - Federal, state and local officials gathered Monday to mark the completion of a \$2.2 million line extension project by the Lower Ten Mile Joint Sewer Authority on Sandy Plains Road and Route 188 in Morgan Township.

The occasion also provided the setting for the announcement of \$1.55 million in additional grant money for the second phase of the project, aimed at providing sewerage to Stony Point and Reeseman's Trailer Court.

U.S. Rep. John P. Murtha, D-Johnstown, announced the funding for Phase II of the authority's expansion project at a gathering at the Jefferson fire hall.

He was joined by officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as well as by state Sen. J. Barry Stout, D-Bentleyville, county commissioners, township supervisors and authority members.

Murtha spoke of the importance of the project to the community, noting that at one time many of the local streams were polluted by raw sewage.

Programs developed to help rural communities afford essential water and sewer upgrades have had "tremendous success," he said.

"These upgrades not only provide vital services, but they help to clean up our environment and are key to attracting future residents and economic growth."

The \$1.55 million grant is from the federal Economic Stimulus Bill and provided through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's Section 313 Program.

The grant will make Phase II of the authority's project more feasible by helping to lower customers' estimated monthly sewage bills, Murtha said.

Col. Michael Crall of the army engineers, who also spoke, cited the cooperation among all levels of government in helping to make the project a success.

"Great projects such as this come about when local, state and federal partners work together to help improve people's lives," Crall said.

"This Lower Ten Mile project will not only benefit this community, it will contribute to the national goal of improving environmental quality."

The first phase of the project was started last August and completed several weeks ago.

It included construction of 3,500 feet of sewer line along Route 188 from St. Marcellus Church to Wilson Forestry Products and 2,000 feet of line along Sandy Plains Road.

Phase I was completed with a \$1.58 million USDA Rural Development loan; a \$450,000 Army Corps grant; a \$200,000 Appalachian Regional Commission grant; and \$43,000 from the sewer authority.

The second phase is estimated to cost \$11.5 million and includes the installation of 15,600 feet of sanitary sewers, 1,000 feet of force main and two pump stations, as well as expansion of the Mather and Williamstown treatment plants. It will serve 165 homes.

The two plants are now in violation of state Department of Environmental Protection requirements because they are considered to be "hydraulically overloaded."

In addition to the \$1.55 million announced Monday, the authority expects to receive \$150,000 from the county and \$288,000 from the authority through tap-in fees, said authority engineer Robert Dengler II.

The authority also has been offered about \$9.7 million in loans from USDA Rural Development.

However, Dengler said, if the authority were to accept the full loan amount, it could make customers' monthly bills too expensive. Accordingly, the authority will be seeking additional grant money from federal and state sources, he said.

The authority serves about 1,400 customers in Jefferson and Clarksville boroughs and Morgan and Jefferson townships in Greene County and in East Bethlehem Township in Washington County.